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man and nature and economic products. The appendices include one on meteorological instruments, methods, etc., one on maps and one containing suggestions to teachers. The last is a list of questions on the text. At the end of each chapter is a list of reference books, with their titles and prices. This is not of much value to the student, but is convenient for the teacher. A list of articles to be found in *Nature*, *Science*, the *Popular Science Monthly*, and similar periodicals might have been of more value in an elementary treatise. However, the plan of referring students to original articles on the subjects discussed is commendable. We can not dismiss the book without another reference to the many really excellent illustrations and charts it contains. The former are, without exception, fresh and new, well chosen to illustrate the author's points and well executed from the bookmaker's standpoint. Many of the charts are original. The volume is, on the whole, the most attractive that we have seen on the subject it treats, and its attractiveness is not at the expense of scientific accuracy. We can safely predict a general adoption of the book as a text in many high schools and academies, and we shall be mistaken if it is not used in some of our colleges, where the instructor desires an *aid* in his work rather than a *substitute* for work.—W. S. B.

Gray's Synoptical Flora of North America.—In 1835 or 1836, Dr. John Torrey planned a Flora of North America, with which Dr. Gray soon became identified, and, in July, 1838, the first part (Ranunculaceæ to Caryophyllaceæ) was published; a little later (October, of the same year), the second part appeared, and in June, 1840, the third and fourth parts were issued, completing Vol. I, the Polypetalæ. As will be remembered, Volume II was not completed, a portion appearing in 1841, and the work being suspended at the end of the Compositæ in 1843 (February). Here the work stopped for many years, and was resumed in 1878 by Dr. Gray (Dr. Torrey having died five years earlier) under the slightly different title of A *Synoptical* Flora of North America. In this volume the Gamopetalæ were completed; in 1884, the Compositæ and preceding families, since whose elaboration more than forty years had passed, were revived. Then shortly afterwards, 1888, came the death of Dr. Gray, followed, in 1892, by the death of Dr. Watson, before the publication of other parts.

In October, 1895, Dr. B. L. Robinson issued the first fascicle of the revision of Vol. I of the Flora, a little more than fifty-seven years since the appearance of the corresponding fascicle. This includes the polypetalous families—Ranunculaceæ to Frankeniaceæ. It includes much of Dr. Gray's work, to which is added something of Dr. Watson's work, to which we have now added the results of Dr. Robinson's studies.

With such a history, stretching back as it does through more than half a century, it is not to be wondered at that the work is conservative to a marked degree. The sequence of families can differ little from that adopted nearly sixty years ago, and in this fascicle the citation of authorities, the matter of nomenclature, etc., have been made to conform as far as possible to the treatment accorded them seventeen years ago. This extreme conservatism is to be regretted, since science is more productive just as its followers are least tied by the traditions of the past. Yet, with all its conservatism, the Synoptical Flora will be invaluable, and every systematic botanist will hope that health and strength may not fail the present editor before his task is completed.

—CHARLES E. BESSEY.

The Natural History of Plants.[1]—About seven years ago the eminent professor of botany in the University of Vienna, gave to the botanical world a book under the title *Pflanzenleben*, with which botanists soon became familiar as a most useful work. Some time ago the welcome announcement was made that the work was to be translated and brought out simultaneously in England and America. This has now been accomplished, and the result is before us in four good sized volumes, each called a "half-volume," which are attractive externally and internally. On comparing the translation, as brought out by Messrs Holt & Co., with the original, it must be conceded that the former is the by far better done, both in the clearness of text and the perfection with which the printer has brought out the illustrations. The colored plates are especially well done, being printed from the originals by the Bibliographische Institut of Leipzig.

For those who have not seen the original, it may be well to say that it presents in a readable manner (in a *popular* manner, we might say, if the word had not been so dreadfully abused) the main facts as to the structure, biology, and physiology of plants. It is not a text book for daily conning by the student, but it is rather a most interesting work to

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[1] *The Natural History of Plants,* their forms, growth, reproduction and distribution, from the German of Anton Kerner von Marilaun, Professor of Botany in the University of Vienna, by F. W. Oliver, M. A., D. Sc. Quain Professor of Botany in University College, London, with the assistance of Marian Busk, B. Sc., and Mary F. Ewart, B. Sc. With about 1000 original woodcut illustrations and 16 plates in colors. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2 vols., large 8vo. pp. 777 and 983.